

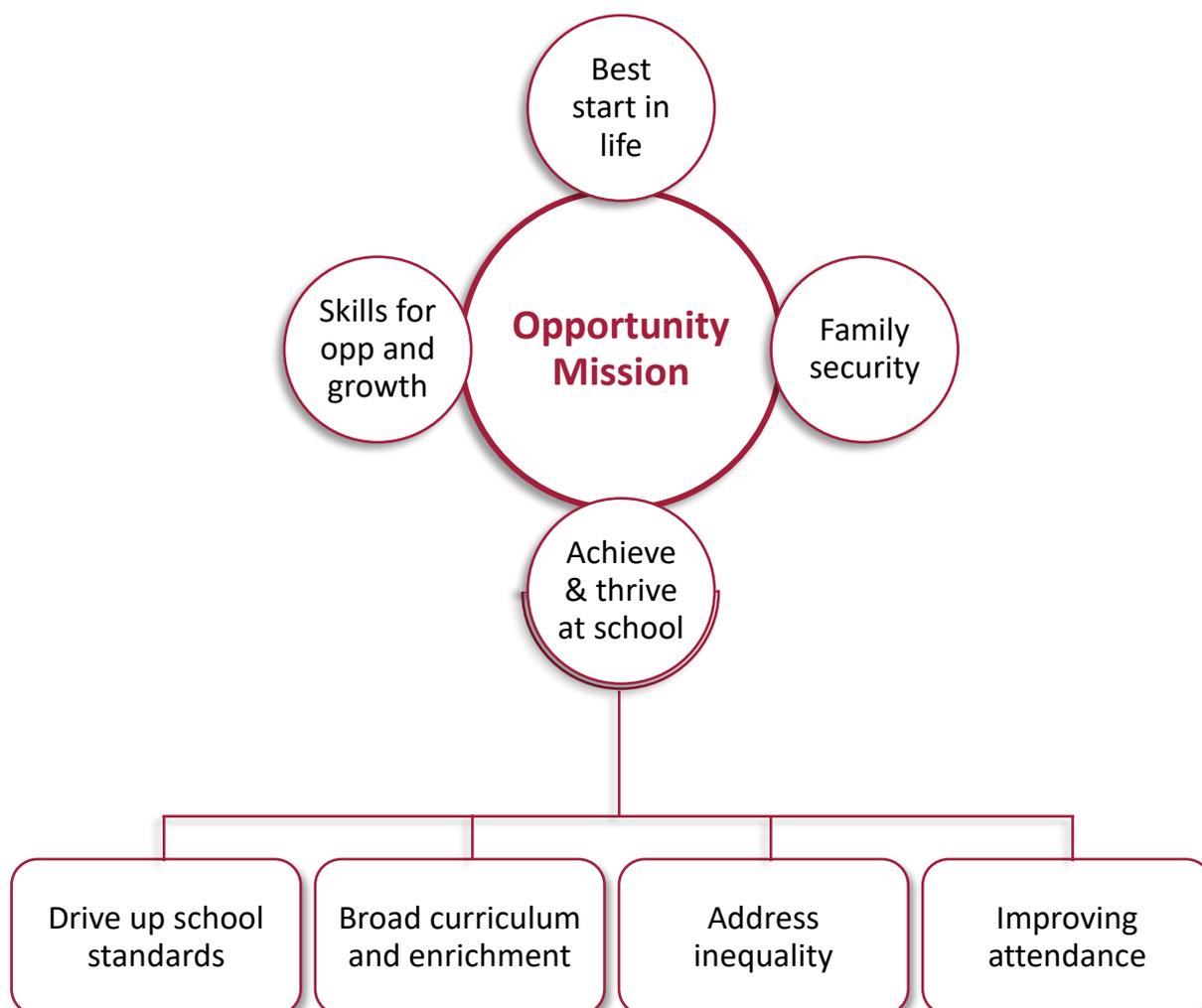


National Centre for Arts and Music Education

Invitation to Tender highlights

DfE published the Invitation to Tender for the National Centre for Arts and Music Education (England only) on 18 February 2026. Information is only being published on the DfE’s tendering portal, Jaggaer, and booking for any information sessions and the mechanism for asking questions is also through Jaggaer.

The National Centre for Arts and Music Education aligns with the government’s Opportunity Mission, under the ‘Achieve and thrive at school’:



Timeline and funding

		National Centre contract	Education context	DfE funding	
				Acad	Fin Yr
Pre-contract	18 Feb 26	Invitation to Tender (ITT)	New progress measure consultation Schools White Paper Enrichment framework due to be published SEND consultation		
	29 Apr 26	Tender deadline (12 noon)			
	May	Evaluation period			
	5 Jun 26	Contract award and 8-day standstill			
		Contract fine-tune and mobilisation			
Year 1	1 Sep 26	Contract starts for 2026-29	Pupil engagement framework (date unknown)	£3.8M	£2.2M
					£3.8M
Year 2	1 Sep 27	Centre assumes oversight of Hubs	New National Curriculum published	£4.3M	
					£5M
Year 3	1 Sep 28		New National Curriculum effective New style GCSEs published	£5M	
					£2M
	31 Aug 29	End of initial contract			
Ext Year 1	1 Sep 29	1 st possible renewal	First teaching of new style GCSEs		
Ext Year 2	1 Sep 30	2 nd possible renewal	New style GCSE exams		
Ext Year 3	1 Sep 31	3 rd possible renewal			
	31 Aug 32	End of contract			

Each line in the table is two months

Funding will total £13M in the first three years (the academic year funding looks like £13.1M owing to rounding) and is intended to reach a “stable state”. The National Centre may spend up to 5% on

administration and from year 2 it is expected to spend at least 20% managing Music Hubs. There are limits (but unlike for Music Hubs, not prohibitions) for spend on marketing and websites.

Funding for the National Centre does not include the funding for Music Hubs. While DfE have indicated that they would like to be able offer multi-year funding for Music Hubs, the specification document for the National Centre simply says that Hub funding for 2026/27 will be announced later in the year.

What the National Centre for Arts and Music Education will do

The Department for Education will look to the National Centre for Arts and Music Education to provide system leadership to increase capacity in the system and to catalyse and prioritise philanthropic investment in arts education in schools, particularly in less well-serve areas.



The National Centre for Arts and Music Education will work with partners, in particular:



Priorities for 2026-2029	Objectives	Activities
1. Strategic national leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase capability of schools, MATs, cultural organisations and philanthropists to develop partnerships b) Improve the evidence base for arts education and partners' capacity to use it for better targeted investment c) Increase philanthropic investment for arts education in schools in cold spots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Map the landscape b) Draw on insights from Bridge organisations, LCEPs and Creative Partnerships c) Build relationships and credibility, including with Music Hubs d) Build an evidence repository e) Work with philanthropic funders to maximise impact f) Support new partnerships g) Be ethical, transparent, sustainable and comply with government standards
2. Support excellent teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase take-up of CPD b) As a) particularly by schools with a high proportion of SEND c) Increase schools reporting improved arts teaching up to KS4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review current CPD including Music Hubs and their Lead Schools b) Develop quality assurance standards for content and efficacy c) Design a new online CPD offer which builds teachers' skills over time d) Create CPD to fill gaps and curate quality assured CPD resources
3. Promote arts education to school leaders, teachers, parents and pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase availability and take-up of information and guidance for young people b) Increase proportion of disadvantaged young people taking this up c) Increase proportion of young people and parents reporting awareness, take-up and satisfaction 	<p>More flexibility around activities for this objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Engage with schools, cultural sector and government departments to promote the Centre and value of arts education b) Review existing information and guidance c) User research to understand how to engage schools and young people d) Create guidance for Music Hubs and other providers e) Collaborate with providers to align their resources with the National Centre's

Priorities for 2026-2029	Objectives	Activities
Oversight of the Music Hub network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase proportion of schools with improved Music curriculum and enrichment offer b) Increase proportion of young people participating c) Increase proportion of young people in disadvantage and with SEND participating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Engage with Hubs and consider how grant administration may be streamlined b) Work with Hubs to prepare for the new National Curriculum c) Manage grants and Hubs' performance d) Promote visibility and understanding of Hubs to parents and more widely

Annex A sets out draft KPIs for each of the three priorities and oversight of Music Hubs.

Governance, reporting and evaluation

The Department for Education will establish a programme board and retain a programme manager. The National Centre for Arts and Music Education will report to the programme manager monthly.

Alongside its own evaluation, the DfE will commission and pay for an independent evaluation and the National Centre for Arts and Music Education should plan to meet “reasonable administrative requirements” for this.

Of particular interest to Music Hubs

Although the budget for the National Centre for Arts and Music Education is known for three years, it looks likely that the 2026/27 funding for Hubs may still be a single-year announcement.

Hubs will have to work with the National Centre for Arts and Music Education during 2026/27 as it prepares to take on the fundholder role from year 2.

The National Centre is expected to identify “significant reductions and improvements” in Music Hub reporting (para.35).

There is an indication (para.37b(iii)) that Music Hubs will report to the National Centre termly.